

Selectmen seek more answers from county

Meet with Gottling
to discuss options

By CAROLYN DUBE
Staff Reporter

SUNAPEE — Sunapee Selectmen feel the county is violating the law in refusing to provide them with a detailed explanation of where the town's money is going when it pays county taxes.

According to Town Manager Donna Nashawaty, she was referred to a copy of the county budget when she, per the selectmen's request, asked for information on exactly how Sunapee's money was being spent.

Selectman William Roach said he felt that answer was unacceptable as a response to a request for a more detailed description. A letter from the county to the selectmen said basically that it wouldn't go into more detail than it already has, Roach said.

The letter, signed by County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio, said he received a letter dated Oct. 24 from the selectmen with their request and he hoped his response helped answer the town's questions.

"I think there's going to be a lot of changes in taxation this next legislative session."

— William Roach
Sunapee selectman

"I would like to begin by stating my firm belief that all programs and services being provided by Sullivan County are being done in accordance with New Hampshire law," he wrote.

He said it would be "wasteful to engage in a line-by-line analysis of the County budget when your concerns are, as noted in your letter, more particularized.

"Implicit in the representation that the 'Town of Sunapee has felt that the authorization granting authority to run various programs and services is questionable,' is that you have already reviewed the budget and identified those programs and services you believe are 'questionable,'" Gil de Rubio wrote.

He asked Sunapee to share a list with the county of the programs and services they find questionable to create a starting point for a discussion between the town and him, rather than asking for a blanket review of the entire budget.

"It would be nice to say they answered all our questions," Selectman Stephen White said, conceding they had not.

Selectman William Roach said he was very disappointed in the letter they received back from Gil de Rubio and he'd like to see how many people from Sunapee use facilities like the county jail and nursing home versus how much the town is paying for it.

Sunapee is paying nearly a quarter of the services in Sullivan County while it boasts only 8 percent of the population. Roach said he can be certain 25 percent of the inmates at the county jail and 25 percent of the residents at the county home don't come from Sunapee.

Roach suggested they ask the county for the figures of how many people they have in those facilities and what the average

cost per person is, and if they are refused they'll file a petition under the right to know law.

He also suggested they ask their state representative-elect Sue Gottling, to bring forward a Legislative Service Request (LSR) requiring counties give fiscal reports town by town.

"We'd like some sort of accounting of expenditures by town," Roach said.

The selectmen also discussed asking Gottling to return an iteration of the 2 percent bill to legislation.

Nashawaty pointed out that "because the bill was introduced into legislation last year, it would have to be worded differently because bills are technically supposed to skip a year in the legislation if they fail.

The selectmen voted in a unanimous decision to ask Gottling to bring a bill forward for them regarding a way to equalize the county tax apportionment. Roach also made a motion to ask

Gottling to resubmit the town's original 2 percent bill that never made it to be an LSR.

"Our bill ended up on the cutting room floor before it ever got put past a researcher," Nashawaty said.

"I think there's going to be a lot of changes in taxation this next legislative session," Roach predicted.

The selectmen were scheduled to meet with Gottling at their Monday night meeting, Dec. 4, to discuss the issue between the town and county.